

# **Prayers of Record**

## **A Collection of Public Prayers**

**by**

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## Notes On Public Prayer

Prayers of Record means that what follows are some prayers that were written out for special occasions. My background was not liturgical and so most of my prayers were impromptu, off the record, or "from the heart." Many were extemporaneous from notes on the back of anything, even a napkin.

In Divinity School I did have the opportunity and the good fortune of studying with Massey Shepherd as he moved from his Methodist upbringing into becoming a "high church" Episcopalian. This meant for me, with my background in Latin and Greek, an opportunity to understand and appreciate the Latin, Greek and even the Slavic liturgies. However I felt that the traditional liturgical and the more impromptu prayer cultures were two different ways of worship.

Personally my wrestling with the concept of God drastically affected my prayers as I wandered around trying to focus on God as an objective entity and God as a wistful hope of a person or persons seeking to attain the ideal behavior in life that they could not attain alone, yet hoped they might be able to attain with extra-terrestrial help.

I recognize that there is a difference between public prayers and personal devotions. So this random

collection of prayers reflects hopes and aspirations of the people gathered as well as my attempt to resonate with the greatest number of persons who are hearing my prayer as well as to give a certain inclusiveness to the event.

Candidly speaking, public prayer can be used for crowd control. It is a means by which the convener can focus those assembled in a particular place at a particular time on the event forthcoming. It may be viewed as a process by which voids in human activity can be filled with positive spirits or good thoughts in order to keep out divisive spirits or bad thoughts.

At least prayer can be used as a reinforcement for those who are "believers" so that petitions to a divine entity can fill the hopes of many who believe that which is unattainable through their own efforts may somehow be attainable through the assistance of the Divine.

Prayer can give a curtain of respectability draped around a human event and can be used to reinforce convictions jointly held by those assembled perhaps causing the new person or neophyte in the group to desire to be included within the "inner circle". In many cases, particularly in church services, the pastoral prayer gives the pastor an opportunity to focus the psyche of the group on the needs of individual members. This is not the time to preview the sermon,

otherwise trying to reinforce the educational motif in the sermon to come. A proper prayer will not scold but lift up hope from despair, ramp up the enthusiasm of each and all to try yet again to press forward to reach individual and also common goals. There is nothing wrong with a good pep rally.

In a so-called prayer of invocation how great the surprise would be if it turned out that a divine spirit or God himself would really make his or her presence known! For most persons such expectation does not really exist. Rather invocations, as has been said before, are to focus the mind of the group on the task at hand, otherwise crowd control.

By just casual observation it becomes obvious that the setting for these prayers is essentially in higher education and Drake University in particular where I spent most of my life in administration, teaching and as an unofficial "praying" chaplain as well as a counselor and advisor to faculty and students.

Incidentally, it would be interesting to contrast Drake University in its days of religious orientation and its prayer life with Drake University of today in its dominating secular phase with very few prayers at official occasions if any.

If this collection of prayers should fall into your hands please feel free to use them in any way they can

serve you as you make real and genuine your prayer life privately or publicly.\*

\*To Karen Harvey goes my appreciation for making possible the publication of this collection by taking this project on as a fulfillment of the public service requirement by students graduating from the American Institute of Business in Des Moines. All the prayers were dictated into my computer via speech software.

\*To Maxine, who reads copy with a critic's eye, proofs manuscripts and provides motivation toward task completion goes a lifetime of thanks, especially since this was not a part of our wedding vows.

\*Three prayers, pages 38, 41 and 48 slightly edited, were previously published In Winged Words 2006 by The Disciples Divinity House of The University of Chicago.

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## Prayer To Find God!

Oh God, how do we find thee? Do we find you in the clashing components of creation as gases swirl and atoms clinch? Do we find you leading great armies of men clashing around you? Do we find you, Oh God, setting fire on altars upon which sacrifices are made? Do we find you, Oh God, angry and filled with indignation, or do we find you, God, weeping over your children, calling to the disobedient, showing mercy and forgiveness? Do we find you, Oh God, as a still small voice, as a presence nearer to us than even our hands and feet, closer than the very air we breathe? Do we find you, Oh God, wearing our shoes and going with us as we worship in our churches?

Oh God, help us to realize that your presence is close, that you knock on the doors of our lives and we need only to open and let you in. Help us, Oh God, to acknowledge your presence as a member of our family and of our community, as a citizen of our nation, but not exclusively, for all families the world around rightfully claim Thee, thus becoming our brothers and sisters. Forgive us, Oh God, for ignoring your presence, for not living in the way you've taught us to live. Forgive us, Oh God, for presuming to put you into a temple on a mountaintop, or on a rare fine altar.



Forgive us, Oh God, for calling on you only when we want to wage war. Forgive us, Oh God, for creating ourselves in your image. No, not in your image but creating you in our image. Help us, Oh God, to come up to the image which you hope for us.

Oh God, extend the loving care of this congregation into the homes of all its parishioners and all in the community who are lonely, who are sick or perplexed, bewildered, or unemployed.

Grant, Oh God, that this congregation may be a great sustaining nest of security for all within its reach. Grant, Oh God, that each one of us may so live that your light will shine through us to lighten the path of all who walk in these days of darkness. We give thanks to you, Oh God, for life itself and for the opportunity to be in your presence and to be stewards of your purpose. Give us the strength and insight beyond that which we possess to use such strength and insight for the building of your kingdom here on earth even as it is in heaven. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.\*

\* This and the next five prayers were originally pastoral prayers.

## Prayer in an Electronic Age

Not only from this pulpit, and not only from this church, but all through the land come prayers to you, Oh Lord, each of which with tender heart and compassion you hear. We know that you hear, and we know that you hear each one of us. The prayers of the strong and the faithful are not more significant to you than the prayers of the weak and the sinful. We are grateful that we are created to communicate, and as such have rights of communication. However, we know, Oh Lord, that no electronic technology is necessary to communicate with you. We have had a spiritual Internet with you since the time you first created us.

We are apologetic, Oh Lord, because we know that we have not had our answering machines turned on, and when they were, we didn't return your call. We know, that from the beginning, we have gone back on your instructions and sought our own ways rather than the ways that you had prepared for us to lead us into fullness of life and an eternity of bliss. We are grateful that you have not grown impatient and that you still feel there is hope for us.

We acknowledge, Oh Lord, your guidance through the past week and the promise of your help through the weeks to come. We pray especially for those who are ill, those who are shut in, those who are lonely, those who are away, those who are in distant lands attempting to protect the peace of the world. Be with and sustain and guide all of these.

We pray for the young in the land. Protect them from the evils which we adults bequeath them. Grant that they may see beyond our foibles into our hopes and aspirations. We pray for this congregation and its leadership that they may continue to deepen and expand their influence for good not only in this neighborhood but throughout the city, the state, and the world. Each one of us, Oh God, lift up and guide and attend and keep us in the wisdom which you have for us. Be with our nation as it chooses its leadership, be with all people who must make decisions in relationship to the lives of others. Grant, Oh God, that we may think first of the needs of others and lastly about our own needs. Even as Jesus prayed, "not my will be done, but thine," we pray this prayer. Amen.

## Pastoral Prayer

(Given in a church whose pastor was on vacation  
The prayer was contemporary to the time)

Oh Lord, who art closer than even the air we breathe, who even in closeness does not presume to control but gives us freedom to choose. Yet in our choosing, having chosen wrong, you still keep us in your family and with forgiving heart strive mightily to keep us in the path of righteousness. We thank you for your patience, for your love, for the strength that comes from you to us.

We thank you for the vibrations of life and particularly as they become strong and sustained as we choose the way of goodness, of love, and morality. We thank you for our families. We thank you for our country. We thank you for the challenge of being citizens in this country. We think of the many places, Oh God, throughout the world where enmity and strife are the norm. We think of many situations even in our own country where death presents itself quite boldly day after day after day, impersonally without remorse, even with forethought.

Oh God, reach into our hearts, remove our fears, remove our uncertainties, remove our insecurities, and somehow find for us the road of trust. Help us in our hearts to know what it is to

turn the other cheek. Help us, Oh God, to subdue our resentments so that we can forget the hurts life has bequeathed us. Help us to reach down to lift up and to reach up to grasp your hand for strength. We pray for this church and this congregation, for the pastor, his wife and family. Bless and renew and sustain them and return them safely to us.

Grant that the outreach of this congregation may have no limits, that its influence may be even greater than it intends and that its influence for good shall be as a mighty leaven, yeasting the whole of creation. We pray for those who are ill, those who are confined, those who are lonely, and those who are perplexed. We pray for those who must make decisions that reach out into the wider world, that they choose the good of all rather than profits just for a few.

We pray, Oh God, for the leaders of our nation in these ticklish times of searching for peace. We pray for those in China, Oh God, that somehow communication may be established, and we think especially of the hundreds of thousands now even millions of Christians in that country who persist even as they are a small but a mighty minority. Oh God, let the ways of your son, the Prince of Peace, be our ways, in whose name we pray. Amen.

## Prayer for Congregation Seeking a New Pastor

Oh Great Healer, we bear the wounds of life and refuse to let them heal. Lay upon us your healing balm, the ointment of your love and restore us to purest of health, to beauty of presence, to hope for the future and to love of all humanity.

We are thankful, O God, especially this morning, that so many centuries ago there was one sent by you to bear ministry among his fellows and that we today inherit that ministry and the possibilities that that ministry extends to us. Help us in this season, O God, to renew our faith in the hopes and potentialities of life to deepen our commitment to serve each other and to extend our efforts from this place throughout the world.

Even, as you have in the past, so through this week, come close to those who are in hospitals or at home who are ill, those who are alone, those who are kept close because of infirmities and aging, even those who are not at home but traveling away, give them safety of journey and noblesse of purpose.

Give discernment to the leaders of this congregation, especially the pulpit committee, as they search for tomorrow's leadership here. Be with those who seek to minister in the interim that

strength may be ours to accomplish that which is before us, and wisdom to say the right word and give the healing touch.

Be with the young of the congregation, O God, with all the hopes of all the future before them. O God, grant that we who are older will not destroy the world before they can inherit it. May we make the world into a place of peace not a place of devastation and war. Be with the leaders of our nation, and give them candor and forthrightness that they make decisions that should be lasting and encompassing. Yet, O God, grant that all persons the world around who have differences with each other may seek the ways of peace and not of conflict. Help us, O God, to remember the lesson of the cross and the hope of resurrection. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Easter Prayer During a War

Given as an interim pastor

Jesus chose death making such great sacrifice for us that we celebrate with bright praise and hallelujah his gift of salvation. Help us to realize that throughout this world people do not have the privilege of choosing death. Death chooses them. Life is being snuffed out without any consideration for even the so-called innocent. In the cities of our land crimes of aggression and passion are committed daily. Even in the Bible Belt, the safe agricultural lands of the Midwest, the rates of violence have increased. But, oh God, we are mindful of the wars that are being fought, the struggles between great powers using little people as pawns.

Oh God, even as we pause in the serenity and safety of this building, there are those this day who dare not to worship in public, who are persecuted because of their beliefs. Even gathering in sanctuaries they find there is no respite from war, no protection, no safety, no hope as modern explosives demolish and destroy and tear limb from limb, soul from body.

Oh God of love, soften our calluses, restore to us a sense of tenderness and concern. Bring us to our knees in prayers for peace. Oh God, touch all persons in positions of power that they may



work for peace and turn our energies and wealth in the direction of human restoration.

Oh God, why is it that we flourish and know peace and live in relative security while there are those on every continent of this earth, now viewed from afar by man himself, who will not see the lushness of green, the fertility of field, the birth in the springtime of the new lambs and the calves, but in every place on every continent there is the stench on the earth of the corpses of man and woman and child. Such horror wrought by man himself.

Oh God, forgive us. Lead us out of these rocky paths and blind alleys, turn us to the Prince of peace, help us to glimpse again the possibility of your kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. We pray, God, for those who are ill in hospitals, at home, those who are alone, those who have great concerns and cares, those who agonize about members of their families. We pray for those who bear official responsibility, who must make decisions which in essence may please no one particularly but for the greater good must be chosen.

We pray for those, Oh God, who have responsibility for teaching. Strengthen their hands, their will, their purpose and give them good health. For we know the burden which

modern families place upon them and the lack of support from the home for the schooling of their children.

We pray, Oh God, for the leaders of this church, members of the pulpit committee, bless them and by your providence lead them to the one who in turn shall lead them. Pray for us who sustain them on an interim basis, help us to be able to bring the word that is needed at the time. Oh God, we do not know what we would do without you, for it is too much for us alone. But with you, Oh God, we know it can be done. In the name of Jesus, we pray.

## A Prayer for Those Who Serve

### Labor Day Service

We thank thee, Lord, for men and women who run dairies, feed cattle, cultivate vegetables, gather honey, those who process wheat, corn, and beans, who bake, chore, cook, serve, and clear away utensils, dishes and garbage tending to the needs of our very existence throughout the world. We are so thankful, oh God, for those who also serve. We thank thee for the privilege of knowing another and yet, Oh God, we ask for forgiveness for presuming to know that by our own powers we really know.

Grant us spiritual reflection pools to see others and ourselves together even as you see us. So we are thankful for this period of reflection on those who serve. We pray in the name of the servant, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Iowa Christian Churches State Convention  
Veterans Auditorium 1966

O thou, whose living presence depends not on the amount of human good or evil, the growth or diminution of secularism or the announcement of deicide by theological town criers, grant us thy benediction.

Grant thy benediction upon those here assembled who proclaim your name and serve you, bless the congregations from which we come, bless our ministers, bless the University which our forefathers founded that it may relevantly serve in this day as it has in past days. Bless its new president and his family, the trustees, the staff, faculty, and student body that in an authentic and cooperative spirit potentialities of today become the realities of tomorrow.

Grant that church and university may not lose the vision and hope of thy kingdom on earth. With the lips of many, we pray. Amen.

A prayer for the Church and the  
Ordination of Herbert Miller, Kellogg Christian  
Church, Iowa  
June 12, 1966, 3 PM

Our father, who has given your own son for the salvation of mankind and who did thereby establish the Church as the mother of salvation, we bring to you this day a son of the church, one of your children, who stands in the line of succession of the followers of Christ, to serve and bear the message of salvation to this generation.

We rejoice, Oh God, and give thanks for this gift and we pray that we may continue as a church to nurture and sustain him even as we have in this period of his training. May we never leave him isolated or alone. May we never, as members of his congregation, yield to human deceit and disillusion him or crucify him as he attends to your will. If the cross does come and his friends grow silent and abandon him, Oh God, abandon him not, give him strength even beyond that of friendly surroundings, good wishes, and flattery for work well executed.

Grant that the churches under his leadership may feel the guiding hands of a pastor, hear the heraldic tones of a proclaimer of salvation, know

the seeing eyes of a prophet of justice and follow up the lamp-lighting ways of a teacher.

We are grateful for the congregation at Kellogg as they have supported him and his family in his development. May they continue and increase in their witness to Your love for mankind.

In this day as the church girds itself to withstand attack from within and from without, renew, oh God, the dedication of the faithful and turn about the unfaithful that your word may be made known throughout the earth and Your Kingdom come among all.

Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Ordination Prayer for David Stout, March 21,  
1965,  
Christian Church, Eddyville, Iowa

Oh Thou, who during the turning of the earth has heard countless calls coming from your children in many conditions of joy and sorrow, plenty and want, peace and anxiety, of many races, tongues, and climates, we presume to call on you to come close to us at this moment. We present to you one from among us who today is giving himself to you in a special way as our faithful servant, bearing your love to your children where ever your guidance takes him. We remember the long line of your servants, living and dead, who have come from the churches in Iowa to the halls of Drake University. To these, Oh God, we would add another servant for the battle of good and evil. We would commit David this day to the holy office of Christian Ministry.

Strengthen him with your Spirit, overcoming weakness, temptation, weariness, overconfidence, and loneliness, as they arise in his day-to-day service. Watch over his wife and family that together their loving example and unselfish service may strengthen others to diligence in Christian family life and service. Guide him that he may constantly speak for you and keep silent for himself. Teach him that in

wisdom he may act for you and move not under impulse. Love him that he may love all whom he serves and resist the desire for status adulation and prerogative. May his focus be on the needs of the lowliest even before the desire for eternal bliss. Develop his arts of comforting, of encouraging, of praising, of reproving, and of shepherding. Speak often with his soul, keep his head in the heavens and his heart among the people.

May thy spirit so fill him that he will fear not to walk the path of thy son, his disciples, and all the apostles and saints of the ages who have served thee. May his ministry help to lead us to peace, and amity, among all peoples. In the name of your servant and the ever present spirit of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost sustained by the fellowship of people living and departed, present and afar, we pray. Amen.



Funeral Prayer for Earle Barclay  
January 4, 1996

We thank you for your encompassing presence, oh Spirit of Truth and Righteousness. With deep gratefulness we acknowledge the comforting embrace of your never tiring arms supporting us in this hour.

Yesterday, there lived among us your devoted servant, Earle Barclay, whose life was spent answering the call of your Son to be his disciple and feed his sheep. You know well that his life was a light on the paths of many and you know well that his stewardship multiplied many times the talents you bequeathed him.

Today, we who knew and felt his ministry give thanks to you for the gift of his life among us. Our hearts are filled with sorrow at his departure but also with joy that his influence shall resonate down through the years in the lives he has touched in your name. Thank you for the pleasure of his company and for the talents of singing, preaching and shepherding that he cultivated and used for the growth of your kingdom on earth.

We also give thanks for Rosella and her role in their joint ministry. Comfort her and Cheryl and

Winston in their loss. Give them satisfaction and strength in remembering his earthly presence.

Tomorrow, Oh Essence of Love, send us many young persons of Earle Barclay's dedication who, filled with the Holy Spirit, hear your call to tend the flocks who bleat even now for protection from the storms of this time and who would gather the harvest that is even now ready. Where are they, Oh Divine Spirit, who will hear your call and become willing to give themselves unstintingly and sacrificially to take the place of such as our friend and colleague Earle Barclay?

With the assurance that you have already said to our friend and colleague, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," we pray that you will grant to all of us a renewed dedication to preach the gospel of Jesus, the Christ, and to labor unceasingly, not only because the night does come, but also because there will come the dawning of the new day of your will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Hear our petition we humbly pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Prayers at the Opening of the Academic Year**

Six Convocations held for parents and new students  
Drake University

I

Oh God, we bring these cherished members of our family that they may be ably fitted to become servants in this world we inhabit. We pray forgiveness for our own failings in their rearing including sins of omission and commission. Grant that in no way our failure to perceive and live the truth before them will be a handicap.

We pray that those to whom we now entrust their instruction may receive these students with enthusiasm and renewed dedication. May they, with patience and insight, stimulate the hearts and minds of our children with the will to know and in knowing dedicate themselves to worthy fields of service. Grant that their associations may be such as to be uplifting for each other. Protect them from status-seeking or the loss of purpose.

Grant that the leaders and teachers of the University may have an abundance of resources with which to work so that her students may be equipped to seize hold of tomorrow even while yet it is today. So lead us to peace and love among all humanity. Amen.

## II

Oh God, we are grateful today for the privilege of parenthood, for the opportunity to rear our children in a land whose people cherish education. At this time in the life of members of our families, we are mindful that there is much that we wish we had done to prepare them for adulthood. If we are hesitant to trust them, forgive us. If we have not helped them to establish worthy values on which to base their choices, forgive us.

Grant that we may be able as parents to so live that nothing at home will destroy their faith and trust in us, or discredit their search for deeper values. Make us tolerant and receptive to new ideas and the wider horizons which shall be theirs. Help us to

take the role of "old fogey" graciously and with understanding.

May thy guidance be given to the leaders and faculty at this university and to all who join together throughout our land to prepare for our nation and our world true servants of all humanity. In the name of truth and wisdom, mercy and peace, we pray, Oh God, Amen.

### III

Eternal Spirit who pervades all of creation, hear us as we gather from across this nation and indeed from around the world to inaugurate a new era in our lives.

We are mindful of your guidance of thousands of others who have over the last 107 years gathered at this place to share in the search for knowledge, develop skills, and attain wisdom, as well as to perfect the art of human empathy which led them to serve in fields of religion, the arts, education, science, health, law, government, business and many other areas of human need.

We are thankful for the vision of the early Christian Church founders of this university and

many others whose deep love of God and neighbor caused them continually to support and sustain this university. We are grateful for the hundreds of faculty and administration who spent their lives serving this university. Bless and guide those who presently watch over its destiny. Lead them to a healthy blend of tradition and contemporaneity.

Band us together as new students, parents, faculty, administration, trustees and alumni to continue the march toward excellence in preparing each class to take its place in the task of establishing justice, assuaging bitterness, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, and bringing peace in all parts of our earth.

Help each of us to practice such personal discipline as will give us health of body, alertness of mind, and sensitivity of spirit so that each day, each hour of this all too short a time, the years at Drake\* will count significantly in the preparation for our chosen field of service.

Grant that in all our association here at Drake we relate to others helpfully and not parasitically. In real terms, bring quiet so others may sleep or study as the need may be, having our lessons prepared so that our classes may be fulfilling,

and most of all having a joyful spirit so a contagion of pleasantness may radiate from each of us.

All this we pray through the eternal Spirit that binds us together in this great undertaking.  
Amen.

#### IV

Eternal teacher of life, grant that the faculty and staff of the University may reflect the eagerness and zeal of the new student, that they do nothing to dull the edge of curiosity or extol the comfort of mediocrity.

Grant that students may hold to high ideals and virtue in developing and maintaining personal integrity and social relationships during their collegiate sojourn.

Open to us friendships rather than opportunities for exploitation.

Open to us knowledge rather than the accumulation of credits.

Open to us commitment rather than adjustment.

Open to us the security of knowing ourselves rather than the insecurity of serving our appetites.

Though we would not presume to be martyrs, grant to us the rare ecstasy of being "crucified daily" for truth's sake. Amen.

## V

Our father, we are grateful for all persons and circumstances that have brought us to this moment. We are grateful for the tradition of education, the hopes of our loved ones, the devotion of teachers, and our personal aspirations. In these moments, oh God, make us at ease, release us from personal qualm, let our eagerness displace uncertainty, let past failures be lost in hopes of future success, let us see that cockiness and dogmatism are marks of loneliness and insecurity. Lead us with humility to the halls of wisdom and the paths of righteousness.

Open our ears to the babble of many languages, other than her own, and help us to hear expressed the wisdom, the hopes, the scholarship, the contributions of other nations and peoples. Open our eyes to strange scripts and complicated symbols beneath which lie all humanities' striving for the specific and the



universal, for essence, and totality. In all of our experience, Oh God, grant that we do not overlook that all knowledge is summed up in the love of thee and our fellows. Amen.

## VI

It is with gratefulness, O God, that we think of all who have helped to bring us to this moment. Our parents and loved ones who have led us to this day and the tradition of our country for education including those who have endowed chairs of learning, built facilities, and established scholarships.

Grant us courage sufficient to face ourselves honestly, to examine our motives resolutely, and determine our loyalties clearly. Remove from us fear of the new, shame of the old, or distrust of the proven. Teach us that responding to the needs of others fulfills our own deep needs. Lead us in the ways of lasting friendships, enlarging skills, and deepening thoughts. Amen

## A Commencement Prayer

Our Father, we come with pride this evening in our accomplishments. Yet we are mindful of our debt to so many, those who have cherished the tradition of education, who given their lives to scholarship and those who have worked so that each succeeding generation might go further.

We feel Your presence as we gather in celebration of accomplishments. We offer our gains to You to consecrate and to dedicate.

As members of the University, we are thankful for the privilege we have had to know and serve these who come to us as students.

We pray that those who continue their preparation do so with increased zeal and hope, that those who begin teaching and return to teaching may do so with greater joy and satisfaction freed from a sense of routine and service just for pay.

Grant to the leadership of this university its trustees, its president, and officers, faculty and staff, health and purpose, satisfaction and gratification that full joy in serving in this place may come to each one. We pray for our land.

Make us honest enough to establish peace and tranquility in our lives. Make us ingenious enough to act decisively for peace in other parts of the world.

Make us humble enough to measure carefully our words and our deeds that they may be in keeping with your will for us and not just our will for ourselves. Amen.

## Commencement Prayer

June, 1965

Oh great arbiter of human affairs, we do not presume to ask your presence among us at this hour if such asking should take You even for a moment from men who now crawl in steaming jungles through the valley of the shadow of death.

We gather to dedicate to your service men and women who, we pray, joining with thousands of other graduates around the world may lead us rapidly to the day when man's greatest enemy is no longer man.

Grant that each one who has a measure of personal achievement this day may also have a sense of gratefulness to family, friends and faculty who share in their glory. Guide all graduates facing decisions of future service. May they have a sense of call from you and an invitation from their fellows.

We also pray for our university -- we are grateful for those who support and endow higher education as a privilege granted to free persons. May their generosity continue to strengthen our university.

We are thankful for citizens who give diligently and loyally time and service on our board of trustees. Lead them soon to the one who shall become the captain of our ship.\*

Sustain our administrative officials. Give them strength for the many burdens they bear and astuteness for the many decisions which face them.

Give to our faculty diligence in scholarship, growth in teaching skills and happiness in service.

Give comfort to members of the University family who bear the burdens of sorrow, illness, or anxiety at this moment.

Grant our many petitions, oh God, we pray.  
Amen.

\*(Drake University was searching for a new president)

Commencement Prayer  
1972.\*

Almighty God, ruler of the universe and ultimate Judge and Redeemer of our faltering efforts, we offer to you our celebration of accomplishment and hope.

We give thanks for what we have learned about the earth, the moon and the cosmic order, but teach us to conserve what little of Eden is left. We give thanks for what we have learned about social systems but teach us how to live in peace. We give thanks for what we have learned about the human creature but help us to master the demonic elements within us.

We give thanks for the skills, the arts, crafts, the blending of mind and body into an instrument of livelihood but remind us that we do not live by bread alone. As individual members of the university here gathered we ask you to forgive us for times of poor teaching and poor discipleship. Forgive us for those drives for personal rights which have obscured our interdependence. Forgive us for taking the easy path of silence or agreement when we know that we should have spoken our differences even at the price of being outcasts.

Forgive us for speaking too often from the throne of the Ivory Tower. Let us speak more in the lives of our graduates.

Grant us devotion to the equipping of persons to serve you and their fellows in measure equal to those devout souls who founded this university. Remind us continually of the purposes for which Drake was established. Especially sustain Drake's new president as he comes soon to guide us.

Now, bless each family from which these graduating have come.

Bless the new homes established from these years at Drake.

Bless the University as its sons and daughters bring honor and strength to it.

Finally, bless this nation that we someday may deserve to hear, "Blessed are you, peacemakers, for I shall call you my children." Amen.

\*(Maxhn H. McCaw, our son, was in the class)

Prayer on the Occasion of the Dedication of the  
Portrait of Sherman Kirk, May 30, 1964.\*

Oh thou who has been sought by men of every age, race and station, before whom passes the endless procession of mankind bearing needs untold, we bow in thanksgiving for giving to us redemption from the brute levels of intelligence.

Particularly are we grateful for the tradition of the teacher among us and especially are we thankful for the life and influence of the one we honor, Sherman Kirk.

Accept the acts of this day as thanksgiving for his life and work. Bind us closely to the ideals which he cherished, the purposes he supported and the University which he loved so that knowledge and wisdom may follow us and our children's children even throughout all ages to come. Amen.

\*Sherman Kirk, one time Dean of the Drake University Bible College and also teacher of Classical Greek to my father in 1913 and later my teacher in 1936. A dormitory is named after him in which our son, Maxhn, in 1968 lived as floor councilor and later head resident.



Prayer on the Occasion of the Presentation of the  
Fred W. Fitch Portrait  
Pharmacy School  
Drake University  
May 26, 1965

We are thankful:

For men, dream possessed, who have  
bequeathed to the promise of future generations.

For scientists, whose humanitarian qualities drive  
them to find ways to alleviate pain and cure  
disease.

For teachers whose understanding calls to the  
novice and inexperienced.

For students, daring enough to yield to rigid  
disciplines so that they may be trusted with life  
itself.

We pray for the School of Pharmacy of Drake  
University.

We ask You to sustain the health, wisdom, and  
dedication of its dean, faculty and student body.

May those who leave the halls of the school take pride in their profession and not yield to being simply purveyors of merchandise.

May they see that pain assuaged or tension diminished may not be the complete answer to the real need of a whole person.

May they be in their communities persons of total citizenship and out going service. For we pray as those with hope for better human relations.  
Amen.

Prayer for the Dedication of  
Meredith Hall, Drake University  
Thursday, April 22, 1965

The mountains heave, the winds tear, the floods rend, the heat sears and man destroys. Yet, oh God, creation arises from the midst of storm and uncouth man leaves his slobbering, clobbering ways to build a palace to wisdom and learning so that he might better work within the matrix of creation and destruction and understand man the paradox and the paragon.

Accept, Oh God, this product of holy activity as a rampart against the ravaging forces let loose by fearful, ignorant, selfish creatures, but more than a rampart also as a place for the transformation of students into friends and neighbors, servants and saviors.

We give to you the dedicated efforts of families, loyal alumni and faithful friends of Drake. We remember those who gave themselves and their resources for this building who today join us only in spirit and memory -- Edwin and Edna Meredith and Henry Harmon.

We dedicate not only the metal, glass, brick, concrete, and wood woven and welded together in a great creative act by architect and artisan, but also the functions and activities housed within. Particularly do we pray that the arts of communication through an ever expanding mass media be effective for the guiding of man to higher goals, greater achievement and larger service.

Oh God we give you no higher worship than when we would take on your own qualities. This we pledge to do here as we dedicate Meredith Hall. Accept our offerings and bless us; for we pray in the Spirit of the Creator, the servant, and the abiding presence of truth. Amen.

Invocation for Drake Law Alumni Dinner 1962  
at which President Harry Truman spoke\*

We are thankful for our nation and its people. In these days of scientific achievement we would also be mindful of and give thanks for our heritage in law, for our halls of Legislation, our courts of adjudication and, most of all, our right to choose our leaders from our own midst.

We are thankful for our university and its law school. Grant that the service of humanity may continue to be the motivation for excellence in the study and practice of law.

We are thankful that we are free. Help us to know true freedom by failing not to help others to be free.

We are thankful for justice. Help us to be more just by implementing justice for all.

We are thankful for mercy. Help us to know mercy by being merciful and forgiving.

We are thankful for love. Help us to draw on the source of universal love by loving our fellows without prejudice or discrimination.

For food and fellowship we are thankful. May we be fully fed of mind and soul as we share each with the other this hour. Amen

(At the end of the dinner we were asked to stay in place until the president and his entourage left. President Truman proceeded to shake hands with everybody at the head table. I was at the end of the platform which was about ten inches above the floor. Truman grasped my hand, thanking me profusely for my prayer and now, left behind by those assisting him, proceeded forward not seeing the step down. As he fell he grabbed me and we both were falling headfirst off the platform. I managed to get one leg down to the floor and arrested our fall with Truman draped over my shoulder. After we regained our balance and posture he embraced me again with gratefulness and invited me to visit him and he personally would show me through his library. Unfortunately I did not find the time to do so while he was alive. I called the episode the time I danced with a president.)

## Invocation at the Drake Law Alumni Dinner, 1963

Oh, God, we are grateful that the foundation of justice does not depend upon human ingenuity. We are grateful that in your own administration of justice among us, mercy is shown.

We ask that those who pray for justice suffering from the inhumanity of man to man may have their prayers answered soon.

We dedicate ourselves to being servants of humanity, pledging that we will not be hirelings of evil or corruption.

May thy special blessings come upon the Law College of Drake University, its dean, faculty, and student body, and may it continue the tradition of high scholarship and dedicated service that all persons throughout the world may increasingly become truly free and the reign of law established rather than the reign of war.

Be merciful to us, God, we pray. Amen.

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Invocation for Drake University Law Alumni  
Luncheon

February 22, 1964

Supreme Court Justice Clark present

Eternal judge, from whom comes judgment tempered with mercy, we stand in your presence, not as the innocent without guilt nor as the righteous who have broken no law, nor as the confident with the sense of power, but as persons wearied from the petty detail of preserving status, chagrined that we have avoided decisions which might bring unpleasantness, and saddened over decisions which might bring compromises which have sacrificed the well-being of others.

Forgive us for thinking more highly of ourselves that we ought to think. Remind us that the basis for decision is the truth in so far as you have given to us the power to know it. Awaken us to the cry of the weakest, teaching us that in the answer to the cry comes the elevation of all. Grant that the elders who sit at the gates of justice may rule without favor or fear so that the young will be more inspired by good judgments rather than influence or affluence.



Protect this great democracy from professionalism in the making, the keeping, and the interpreting of the law so that all citizens may increasingly "do justly, love kindness and walk humbly" and so build a society which will "let justice roll as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Bless the Supreme Court of this land that its members may in these difficult and important times be granted good health, deep insight and fearlessness in interpreting the law of the land.

Bless this, our university, its law school, its dean, faculty, students, and alumni that through the work of any one of them this life may be better for many.

Lord of mercy hear us.

Amen.

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Invocation For Drake University Law ALumni  
Dinner 1965

Oh God, look closely at us but do not turn away from us because of what you see. We pray for your help so that what we are, what we do and say may be more in keeping with your own attitude toward us. May the passions of men be tempered through the courts of reason. May ignorance, fear, and prejudice be banished by the light of law as darkness before the dawning of a new day.

May those who rule exercise their franchise by ideals beyond even those held by the electorate.

We stand now remembering the president of Drake who so recently departed.\* Grateful are we for his legacy now unfolding. We are thankful for the ideals of those through the decades who built the foundations of present and future achievement.

We ask your blessing on the dean, the faculty, and student body of The Law School that their sense of vocation may never be diminished. For the scores of the alumni near and far who have received training from Drake and who now serve as keepers of the constitution we ask your special guidance. Now for this occasion of food, fellowship and wisdom we are thankful and we pray in the name of justice and peace for all persons the world round. Amen.

\*Henry Gadd Harmon died in office as president,  
October 5, 1964

Invocation for Conference on Evening Colleges  
Held at Drake University

To come together for just cause is to witness to the potential of human goodness. Grant that we here assembled, may with high hopes, personal joy, and satisfaction, be diligent in the schedule of this day. Grant that our deliberations may increase the pertinence and the efficacy of University Evening Colleges throughout the land.

Keep us mindful that it is persons with whom we deal, not curriculum nor impersonal masses. As well, remind us that we are fallible in our own persons, needing the help of our colleagues and your help, O God, to whom we pray. Amen.

Benediction at Baccalaureate, June 62,  
Drake University

Dismiss us now, Oh Lord, not as pupils from the schoolhouse for we keep our thirst for knowledge, nor as a jury from its duty for evidence calls for decision, or as troops falling out on the parade ground for we would continue together toward our destiny. Rather, send us with Divine blessing to be in the way of truth, justice, and courage that through us more persons in more places may have a fulfilling and lasting life. Amen.

## Football Prayer

I invite the attention of each of you and ask you to bring to this moment your own prayer.

Let the spirit of goodwill flow from each of us gathered round this Field of Fellowship. Let us remember that this is a sports field and not a battlefield. In sobriety let us enjoy the game and each other. May goodly spirits flow from within each of us, rather than into us from bottle or can.

May we recognize and applaud good teamwork which focuses on thwarting the opposition and not their harming. May our thumbs be more up than down. Let us celebrate the hard work and discipline of those who represent us on the field. May their efforts remind us that it also takes teamwork back home in our neighborhoods and communities to meet the challenges that life presents to us.

Safely and from afar many have come to this field. At the end of the game may they depart and arrive safely at home refreshed from the joys of fellowship with old friends and enhanced in the meeting of new friends. So may our desires be united as a positive force undergirding the activities of this day. Amen.\*

\*In the fifties a prayer was included in the opening exercises of a football game which was broadcast back to the area of the visiting team. The prayer above is representative of the many given.

Prayer at Groundbreaking at Slinker School  
December 22, 1971

Oh Lord, our God, ruler of the universe. In this season when candles are lighted and love is extended, accept this offering of community dedication, architectural wisdom and skilled craftsmen.

May this breaking of the earth symbolize the enlarged service of compassion and educational skill which will flow through the lives of teachers and parents into the lives of boys and girls of central Iowa.

We pray that the hands of the builders will be blessed and that in safety and with inspiration they will labor through the coming months so that the date of fulfillment will soon be with us. All this we pray in the name of the Prince of Peace.  
Amen.\*

\*Des Moines Public School for "challenged" students.

Prayer at Naturalization Ceremony,  
May 3, 1971, Des Moines, Iowa.

Our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for those who this day have chosen to live with us.

We are thankful for their courage, their faith, and their talents.

We pray that we may be to them as brothers and sisters, as friends and neighbors, giving encouragement and guidance along the way of service in our great country.

Enable them to choose the better ways and reject the lesser ways of our life.

Grant that all of us, together, will bring more quickly the day of justice and peace, love and joy for all persons in this country and throughout the world. Amen.

### For a New Benedictine Elder

May God grant you a portion of his divine wisdom  
so that your ministry will bring --

Enlightenment to the ignorant,

Hope to the despondent,

Health to the sick of body and mind,

Redemption to the lost.

May God guide you so that each person touched  
by you will in turn be an extension of the ministry  
God has given you. Amen.

A prayer for a neighbor who was consecrated as an elder in the  
Benedictine Monastic Order, Spring 2005.



Inaugural Prayer for Patsy Sampson  
Stephens College  
November 6, 1983

Oh Thou, who presides at the table of truth and grants undeserved mercy to disobedient beings, whose essence is love and yet whose inexorable laws bring judgment day by day, we feel your presence in a special way as we set aside this day to honor ourselves by commissioning our friend and colleague, Patsy Sampson, in the duties of special servant of higher education at Stephens College.

We are grateful for the high aspirations of the founders of Columbia Female Academy, and for the devoted service of faculty, staff, administration and curators through the years. Rightly are we proud of the scholars who have gone from this place to all parts of the world as trustees of truth, ministers of mercy and laborers in love.

Thankful are we for the dedication and sacrifice of those who have built Stephens College, given us these facilities and passed on the Stephens College tradition. Thankful are we for the one who has accepted the call to the presidency of this institution of higher education, and whose path, being guided by your providence, has crossed

our own paths and the many paths of others to the benefit and inspiration of all.

Grant a healthy body, an alert mind, and an inclusive spirit to Patsy Sampson that under her administration with her colleagues she may forthrightly approach the feast at the table of truth and prepare the students of Stephens College to lead us into a hopeful future from this frightening present. Preserve her and the college from the corrosive influence of those with petty quarrels, indolent performances, self-preserving proposals, miserly support, shortsighted seriousness, political narrowness and dogmatic posturing.

As President Sampson clears the path to the table of truth, may there be a contagious song in her heart, a spring in her step, strength in her arms and wit from her tongue as well as warmth and compassion in her bosom and imagination and dreams in her mind so that her spirit will ascend to consummate with the source of truth yet, dwell humbly with those she serves.

God bless President Patsy Sampson. God bless Stephens College. God bless America and God bless all people on this earth, Amen.

Invocation for the 60th High School Reunion  
Abraham Lincoln High School Class of 1935

O thou who art known in many languages and by many names, hear us.

Throughout our lives we have called for your presence and guidance.

Tonight we gather in body and in spirit to celebrate and remember.

Grant to us the sense of nearness of those not able to join with us.

Bless those who are ill, grant recovery if such is possible.

Receive kindly those who increasingly dance a heavenly step.

We also pray for divine support for the children of this age.

May opportunities of service and true vocation be theirs.

Let peace and love abound in their lives.

May their parents and teachers lead them into such a future.

In deep gratefulness for the challenging lives you have given us,  
we say, Amen.

Prayer at Elderhostel at Northwestern College,  
Orange city, Iowa

Oh Thou, from whom all of us have come and to whom we will return, Thou who has not only accompanied us in life but also been the essence of our very being, in thankful mode we realize the uniqueness of this gathering. From each to all have come gifts enhancing and enriching. These gifts are like flowers ever blooming whose pleasing colors never fade and whose enveloping fragrance ever persists.

As we depart, may we have safety of travel and a happy homecoming. Some of us carry burdens of flesh and spirit. May these burdens be lifted from us and in their place come renewal and hope.

As we separate, we are grateful that we have been changed by our fellowship with each other. We came as strangers, we leave as friends. May ours be the pleasure ultimately to meet again in the celestial Elderhostel where knowledge and fellowship immersed in love renew our souls in everlasting quest. Now grant us strength from the embrace of your spirit. Amen.

## Polk County Republican Convention Invocation

Oh Thou, who by grand indulgence has allowed humanity to inhabit and hold sway on this earth we would express our gratefulness for life and for the opportunity of self-government. Grant that we shall be restless until all persons here at home throughout our nation and even our world shall have the opportunity and ability to govern themselves. Forgive us for periods of indifference, laziness of effort, and even perversion of our democracy. In this meeting of the Polk County Republican Convention may we deliberate with the sure knowledge that what we do here and in other local conventions is the bedrock of our state and our nation.

Grant our presiding officers wisdom as they lead us toward constructive conclusions. Give strength to those running for office that they lag not in their zeal to win and to serve their fellows. Be with our president as he leads the nation to peace and to the elevation of the quality of life for all citizens. Finally, let each of us know that the quality of life is in essence reflected from the sum total of each of our lives. All this we pray in the spirit of reconciliation and redemption. Amen.